

“STEELE RUDD,” AND HIS GIFT OF LAUGHTER

An Australian Literary Heritage

[By ERIC D. DAVIS]

(Read at a Meeting of the Society on 26 March 1970)

To me personally—it is something very close to my heart to be asked to address you concerning my late father—better known as “Steele Rudd.”

From as early as I can remember, I always thought he was the greatest man in the world, and with the passing of the years, my admiration for him has not diminished any. Needless to say, I am honoured when I am called upon to tell people about the person I always called “Dad.”

No doubt this is also the cardinal reason why I am in the process of writing his biography.

The wording on his memorial cairn at Drayton, where he was born, on the Darling Downs, Queensland, has always impressed me. It reads:

“He brought to Australian writing the rich gift of honest laughter with the undertones of the struggles and sorrows of the pioneers.”

Yes, indeed, he had the ability to make people laugh, and at the same time combine his humour with pathos.

I think it can be truthfully said his writings were an affirmation of the thoughts of W. M. Thackeray, the famous English author, that “A good laugh is sunshine in the house.”

Strangely enough, it wasn’t my father’s intention to appear as a funny man when he started to write in the early ’nineties, but as time went by, the literary mantle of fame which became his lot, I fear often weighed heavily upon him as he endeavoured to please his reading public. He was a little sardonic about the role of funny man that he considered had been forced upon him, due in a large measure to the artists’ illustrations of his early books.

In 1905 he told the late Vance Palmer: “I don’t think comedy’s in my line—if I let myself go I’d be gloomier than Lawson at his worst.”

May be so—anyway—

I recently received a letter from an old gentleman in West-

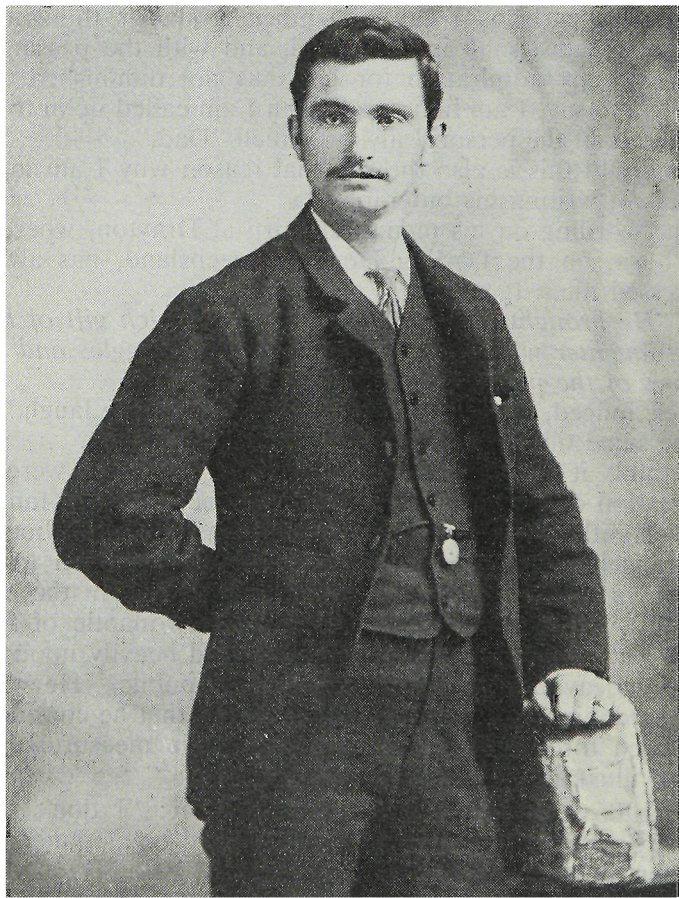
ern Australia which I regard as a gem in its brief simplicity. It reads:

"Dear Sir,—I read 'On Our Selection' and 'The Book of Dan' years ago. Were any others published? Can they be bought now—separate or complete—and where?"

"I want to read them again and have a good laugh before I put on my ascension robe."

Needless to say, I suitably replied.

I feel that any observations I may make about my father would be incomplete without reference to his dedication of his first book "On Our Selection."



A studio photograph taken in 1893 of Arthur Hoey Davis ("Steele Rudd") then aged 25, when he started to write his series of stories.

TRIBUTE TO PIONEERS

I regard this as some of the genuine outpourings of Arthur Hoey Davis.

It is worthy of repetition.

"Pioneers of Australia—to you who gave our country birth to the memory of you: whose names; whose giant enterprise; whose deeds of fortitude and daring were never engraved on tablet or tombstone; to you who strove through the silences of the bushlands and made them ours; to you who delved and toiled in the loneliness through the years that have faded away; to you who have no place in the history of our country, so far as it is yet written; to you who have done most for this land; to you for whom few, in the march of settlement, in the turmoil of busy city life, now appear to care—and to you particularly—good old Dad—this book is most affectionately dedicated."

STEELE RUDD—1899.

In its true concept this was a warm and deep tribute to the early settlers, for what they endured and all they accomplished; and it is well known that his own parents were foremost in his mind when he wrote it.

A deep affection for his father and mother always manifested itself when he talked of his boyhood and adolescent years on the old selection; and it is only now, after all these years, has the thought occurred to me why he omitted his mother from this fine dedication.

This one person whom he loved so much had passed away six years previously. His Dad was still alive.

It was a question that was never asked. It is a question which will never be answered.

At this stage a description of my father as I knew him would be appropriate. I was born in 1908, when he was almost forty years old—he was born on 14 November 1868, so it will be appreciated I am dependent to a degree on older members of the family, of which I am the baby, and to other records for his earlier history. He was six feet tall—active and athletic—his carriage was erect—also his seat on horseback. Originally his hair was dark, but as I first remember him it was greying. He had a ruddy complexion with twinkling brown eyes—keenly alert and observant, with wrinkles at his temples which lent a humorous outlook. Kindness was one of his virtues, and he was generous to the extreme. He had a pleasant quiet humour about him, and loved to reminisce. Many times, as a boy, when I should have been studying, I listened to him talking and yarning with some

visiting friend or relative of the days gone by and the many incidents. Perhaps the nearest to him in this connection in those days was his brother-in-law, Dan Brodie and his brothers "Ned Davis and Dick Davis.

TIPIFIED RUGGED AUSTRALIAN

He typified all the rugged characteristics of the Australian—people enjoyed his company—yet strangely enough he was a shy man. Above all, he could not suffer fools—young or old—and when he was roused, not easily, he had a fiery temper—equipped with keen sarcasm, if need be. Also when occasions demanded it—and no one is in a better position to vouch for it than myself—he could wield the razor strop or his belt with marked effect. However—to sum up—he had a lovable personality.

His Christian names were "Arthur Hoey"—Arthur after Arthur Rutledge, later Sir Arthur. The Rutledges were family friends of his mother's, whilst "Hoey" was the surname of a young clerk in the Petty Sessions Office in Drayton at the time—who befriended his father, and was also godfather at the christening at St. Matthew's, Drayton, in October 1870, one hundred years ago. The records are still there.

EARLY SURVEYS ON THE DOWNS

My grandfather—Thomas Davies (no one seems to know why he dropped "Davies" for "Davis" and no one seems to care) arrived in Drayton in 1849 at the age of twenty, as Assistant to Surveyor, J. C. Burnett. The Darling Downs was then one of the two Northern Districts of New South Wales. The other was the Moreton District.

A short extract from a letter of his is of historical interest. It was written in 1899.

"In the year 1849 I joined the late J. C. Burnett, who was under instructions from the then Surveyor-General (Sir Thomas Mitchell) to settle and mark out the boundaries of the disputed runs on the Darling Downs—notably Eton Vale, Felton, Clifton, Ellangowan, Canning Downs, and Marylands, and also lay out the towns of Drayton and Warwick and their burial grounds. This was done in 1850.

"We also in the same year divided the disputed runs of Cecil Plains, St. Ruth, Waranga, Daandine, Greenbank, Jimbour and Warra Warra, and laid out portion of the town of Dalby.

"In 1850, I assisted Mr. Burnett in marking out a reserve for the future township of Cambooya, but not any part of it as allotments.

“Drayton is therefore the oldest settled township on the Downs.”

At Drayton in 1852 he married Mary Green, who was born in Tuam, County Galway, Ireland. It is generally conceded that it was from this tall, jovial mother that my father acquired his keen sense of humour—and it was the result of her early friendship with the Rutledge family in Ireland, with whom she had come to Queensland, that he later left his native bush for a clerical job in the city.

James Rutledge was the first school teacher in Drayton, and had left Ireland about the same time as Thomas Davis had left Wales.

FIRST WHITE WOMAN IN SURAT

After his marriage, grandfather continued on with the exploration party on the “Balonne” where grandmother had the distinction of being the first white woman in Surat. This north-western section of New South Wales was known in those days as “The Never Never.” The blacks called her “White Mary.” Like grandfather, she too became quite expert in speaking some of the black dialect. There is a short list of aboriginal names and their meanings written by grandfather amongst the records of this Society. Unfortunately, a large manuscript he had compiled of the dialects of “Balonne” and “Maranoa” tribes was burnt when the original “Shingle Hut” was destroyed in the 'nineties.

After three years on the “Balonne” areas they found it unsuitable for married life and they both returned to Drayton where grandfather set up in business as a blacksmith and wheelwright in 1855. In the same year William the first child was born.

He had a good knowledge of surveying, as well as an elementary education in engineering. and from records handed down, was the local general factotum; a dentist when need be, though perhaps his methods were somewhat primitive, and being a capable penman, his assistance was frequently sought by the locals with their correspondence, etc.

OFF TO STANTHORPE

In 1872, tin mining was booming at Stanthorpe, about 100 miles from Drayton, and he decided that his utopia lay in that quarter. Jerome's dray was loaded and the family set off. My father was young at the time, but well remembered the trip with his father, and mother, and six other brothers and sisters, and bits and pieces of furniture. Three older members came along a few days later. Overall, there were

thirteen children born in the family, of whom Arthur was number eight.

From accounts, Stanthorpe did not come up to expectations economically, and after twelve months' stay, the bullock dray was again commissioned to transport the Davis family to Emu Creek at East Greenmount, about twenty miles from Drayton, Queensland.

In 1870, "Eton Vale" homestead had been cut up for selection and grandfather Davis acquired an 160-acre block. He called it "Yalcalbah," which in aboriginal dialect means "Tall Grass." It was here in the heart of the bush that "Steele Rudd" gained the grounding which in later years inspired him to write the "Selection Series" of stories.

Here the "Selection" saga began. His father had gone ahead to erect the slab home with shingle roof, and earthen floor and skillion. It was forever to be known as "Shingle Hut." Those of you who have read "On Our Selection," and it is again in publication, will have gained a more vivid description of the family arrival there from the first chapter of the book, than my limited capabilities will permit. These "Selection" stories, in fact all of "Steele Rudd's" works, were written true to life, and I am pleased to know they have been accepted and regarded for many years as Australian classics.

It is true that the family lived poorly—they all worked hard in clearing and burning off, and the first crops were put in with a hoe and harrowed in with a bramble.

The State School opened at Emu Creek on 31 May 1875, and in October of that year the Davis family contributed six more to the school enrolments. My father was almost seven years of age when he started school there, and left at the age of twelve years, so it will be appreciated that his later accomplishments bear witness of how he applied himself in later years through sustained efforts of study to improve upon his latent talents.

In a letter to A. G. Stephens, in reply to a query about his schooling, he wrote, "I do not know if I was ever very bright at school, but I do remember the master telling me I was the smartest boy in the class—but I also remember being the only one in the class."

WORKED ON PILTON STATION

When he left school, he got a job "picking up" on Pilton Station as junior stockman, general rouseabout, and message boy. On occasions, he rode as an amateur jockey at surrounding picnic race meetings, and one of his original jackets, hand-made by his mother, has come into my pos-

session from my cousin, Mrs. Mary Cook. I make mention here that Arthur Davis was very attached to his mother for whom he had deep and fond affection. She died in 1893, deeply mourned.

When minding sheep or cattle, principally the former, of which there were about 30,000 in those days on Pilton Station, and a shady tree was available, Arthur would snatch time to read. I remember him telling me that the first book he read in the shade of a tree got him the "sack," but he was reinstated. He became so engrossed, he completely forgot all about the sheep—the name of the book was "Henry Dunbar." He would read anything and everything he could get. In later years he told me of the kindness of the then station manager and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. McKinstry, both of whom took a keen liking to him, and helped him in getting what good reading matter was available.

He began to dislike his countless chores in the scorching heat and he once wrote to one of his friends: "Will there ever be work in the shade, or am I doomed to slave in this sun with flies and burrs forever?" By that time he was seventeen, and there was little he could not do as far as station work was concerned, and horses were his great love.

Old and seasoned bushmen recognised his ability to handle a horse, whether it was amongst the thick timber or on the flat. He rode buckjumpers with the same care-free spirit.

However, his stalwart mother had other ideas, and had always discerned that he had other qualities, and encouraged him to read and study as best he could.

Years ago, he told me that the teachings of the Bible always interested and intrigued him. Every Sunday, after the evening meal, the family assembled around the kitchen table at "Shingle Hut," illuminated by the fat lamp, and they were made to pay close and reverent attention to his father whilst he read aloud a chapter from the Bible to them.

ENTERS CIVIL SERVICE

On 21 May 1885, his mother was instrumental through her friendship with Arthur Rutledge (later Sir Arthur Rutledge), son of James Rutledge, the school teacher of Drayton, previously mentioned, in obtaining a position for my father in Brisbane, in the office of the Curator of Intestate Estates, after he had successfully passed an entrance examination.

In his book "The Miserable Clerk," his advent from bush boy to clerk, restricted to four walls, is aptly set out, and

the many incidents bear witness to his life as a Public Servant.

On 14 November 1889, he was transferred to the Justice Department—I understand there is a space in the old Supreme Court building in Brisbane, which is referred to as “Steele Rudd’s” corner, because any spare moments he had in the office he devoted to writing.

At first, he did not settle to the confines of office life, being a product of the bush; nevertheless he made the most of it. He watched and listened intelligently to all that went on round and about him.

In those days, penmanship counted a good deal, and he was advised by one of his senior officials to practice and improve his handwriting as much as possible—his name was George Newman.

His advice was followed and over a period father re-wrote the Bible and Dickens’ “Pickwick Papers.” His efforts were rewarded because over the years that I can recall, he wrote a very easy, legible flowing hand, and always used a “Waverley” nib.

To my knowledge, all his original manuscripts of books, plays, etc., were written in legible long hand. Not satisfied with improving his handwriting, he purchased “Pitman’s Shorthand Book” and set to and taught himself. In this work he was helped and encouraged by a good friend, Mrs. Hunter, and her son, Jack. During these times my father was staying at a boarding house in Leichhardt Street, Spring Hill, Brisbane. The building still stands. It is called “Brockley.” In those days it was known as “Rockeden.”

For practical experience, he took notes unofficially, of Supreme Court proceedings and also visited Parliament House, where he recorded Parliamentary speeches. From his efforts, he became the foundation secretary of the Queensland Shorthand Writers’ Association.

With these qualifications he was appointed Secretary to the Government Commission of Enquiry into the Affairs of The Queensland National Bank Limited, following the bank smashes of 1893; Secretary to The Cloncurry Railway Enquiry, and also accompanied Justice Mansfield, father of our present Governor, Sir Alan Mansfield, on matters of State enquiry, which took them to Sydney.

APPOINTED UNDER SHERIFF

Due, no doubt, to his assiduous application towards improvement in his work, his rise in the Justice Department was rapid, and in July 1902, he was appointed Under Sheriff

of the Supreme Court of Queensland. He grew to become part of the Justice Department and enjoyed its surroundings and proceedings. He also came in close contact with the legal luminaries of his time, and he frequently spoke in admiration of the qualities of the late Sir Samuel Griffith, Chief Justice of Queensland, parliamentarian, and following Federation, the first Chief Justice of The High Court of Australia. He also claimed that the late Justice Real was a brilliant man.

Interesting events occurred when he was Under Sheriff and the one he maintained left an indelible impression upon him, was the famous "Kenniff Case," in which the two brothers, Paddy and Jimmy Kenniff, were both charged and convicted of murder on circumstantial evidence. Herein he had the unpleasant task of reading the Government reprieve from hanging, to a sentence of life imprisonment for Jimmy Kenniff, in the presence of brother Paddy, in the same cell at Boggo Road jail.

This was followed by the grim and unpleasant duty of hearing Paddy's last words on the scaffold protesting his innocence to him before giving the fatal signal to the hangman.

To digress—in his early days as a clerk, he joined the Brisbane Rowing Club, and became a keen and outstanding oarsman. It was in this theatre of sport that he first started to write. His contributions were to a paper in Brisbane called "The Chronicle," comprising skits, pars, and general comments about the rowing world. These he signed "Steele Rudder." The name "Steele" he adopted from the name of the famous English essayist¹ and the "Rudder" being part of a rowing craft. About 1889-1890, he abbreviated his nom-de-plume to "Steele Rudd" under which title he was to establish himself in Australian literature.

In later years his sport became polo—and as he was an excellent horseman, this recreation suited him. For some years he captained the Brisbane side—principally against Toowoomba. The game is still popular in various parts of the Darling Downs, where he played a prominent part in its initial establishment.

Attracted by Adam Lindsay Gordon's poems and Henry Lawson's work in the Sydney "Bulletin," he decided to try his hand at literature in that quarter. An early story he sent

1. Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729), whose social and literary essays in the *Tatler* under the pseudonym of "Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.," borrowed from Swift, constituted a fresh departure in English literature. He developed this form of essay in the *Spectator* and *Guardian*. His essays live through the kindly humour and subtle insight into character which they display.

to the "Bulletin" was returned with the comment "An opium sodden dream without beginning, middle or end."

On Boxing Day, 1894, he married Miss Christina Brodie (always called "Tean"). They had been classmates at the Emu Creek State School. The Rev. J. Watson officiated and her two nieces Vie and Kate Allen were bridesmaids.

THE MAKING OF "STEELE RUDD"

This union proved the making of "Steele Rudd," because my mother possessed a keen sense of humour, combined with sound business judgment, and we members of the family are in complete agreement that it was through her advice and informal editing of his earlier works, that success finally came to him.

On 14 December 1895, "The Sydney Bulletin" published the first of later famous sketches titled "Starting the Selection." It was told graphically and humorously. The "Bulletin's" famous editor and principal, J. F. Archibald, said in a letter to him "by such work you will become famous" and asked for more. Archibald stated that "Steele Rudd's stories came charging into the office like a herd of wallabies—there was no stopping them."

In 1899 twenty-six of the stories were published by "The Bulletin" in book form under the title "On Our Selection."

"Steele Rudd" was always adamant that whatever literary success it was his good fortune to have he gave full credit to the guidance and kindly advice proffered to him by the late J. F. Archibald—who was without peer and without doubt "the father of Australian Literature and Art."

In 1903, his second book, "Our New Selection" was published by the "Bulletin" with A. G. Stephens as editor. It too was an outstanding success.

Very soon the jealousy of the human race manifested itself—particularly in the Justice Department—so far as "Steele Rudd" was concerned.

He had established himself as one of Australia's famous and successful writers. In 1903, the Government of the day found itself in the throes of dealing with economic problems, and as a panacea to this ill, decided that retrenchment in the ranks of the Civil Service (as it was called) could effectively remedy the position.

RETRENCHED!

It was now that the sharp axe fell upon Arthur Davis—principally because he was a government servant, earning,

it was thought, considerable income from his writings—an outside source.

Although the Executive Council had decided upon his retrenchment, he had many friends in, and outside parliament, and another post was offered to him. In his letter declining the position he concluded with the following lines:

*"He either fears his fate too much
or his deserts are small
Who fears to put it to the touch
to win or lose it all."*

From thereon in early 1904, he set about to make journalism his livelihood, and his pen never stopped until his death in 1935.

He did not let the grass grow under his feet and in February 1904, a month after he left the public service he started "Steele Rudd's Magazine" and in the early editions took every opportunity to slate and ridicule Government members from the Premier down. There is no doubt in my mind, and I was not born then, that after twenty years of rapid rise in the service, it hurt his pride and feelings to have been retrenched. But he was never known to admit it.

At one stage his writings so incensed the Government members for the way he satirised them, and the Parliamentary institution, that he was lucky to avoid being brought before "The Bar" of the house and dealt with for contempt.

He was always a man's man, tough, testy, a good friend.

As a point of interest, on one occasion, he did not miss the look of surprise on many present when he arrived at a literary dinner in Sydney, dressed immaculately in evening clothes. His comment was, when told of the surprise of another guest at his attire: What did he expect? Just because I am 'Steele Rudd' I don't have to appear in moleskin trousers, a cabbage tree hat, and blucher boots."

"STEELE RUDD'S MAGAZINE"

From all accounts "Steele Rudd's Magazine" made great headway, and in 1905 it was formed into a company with himself as Editor/Manager. Other shareholders were: My mother; Mr. and Mrs. E. A. (Ashton) Murphy (father and mother of the present Lady Mayoress of Brisbane); J. G. McGregor (Solicitor); James Love; J. S. Isles (agents, founders of the present firm); and A. D. Graham (bar-rister).

In 1907, "Steele Rudd" moved to Sydney from Clayfield, Brisbane, to extend the activities of "the magazine." There he met up with many "Sydney Bulletin" contemporaries of

his day; most of them were in some way or another contributors to his magazine. All were leading writers and artists, whose names today are historically famous, and all of them made their mark through the discerning eye, and kindly help of J. F. Archibald. During this period in Sydney, he wrote and published "The Poor Parson," depicting the trials of the outback minister of religion. As a point of interest, the principal character in the book is "Duncan McClure," drawn from life—and in reality Donald McIntyre, an uncle of my mother's—a grand old pioneer, whose relatives today are spread far and wide in Queensland.

Possibly due to over-reaching, or mis-management, or both, to put it briefly, "Steele Rudd's" Magazine failed, and Arthur Davis, his wife "Tean," two sons, Lin and Gower, and daughter, Violet, returned to the Darling Downs, and for about twelve months took up residence at Greenmount. It was here on 2 March 1908, that I saw the light of day.

A property at Nobby called "The Firs" was purchased and became the family home from 1909 to 1917. In my opinion, this period was one of the happiest of my father's life: he was back in his early haunts—he was back in his native land.

Combined with writing and helping my two brothers, he bred polo ponies. Of the many, there was really only one which was outstanding, a beautiful mare called "Hippy." When we left "The Firs," he sold her to my cousin, Tom Allen, who later rode her in Sydney when playing in the Queensland team, which won the "Dudley Polo Cup" in the early 1920's.

Local authority affairs also commanded his attention, and in 1912 he became the first chairman of the Cambooya Shire Council.

BERT BAILEY AS "DAD"

In 1912, "On Our Selection" was produced as a stage play at the Palace Theatre, Sydney, by Bert Bailey, who played the part of "Dad", and continued in that character role for many years to follow. It was a tremendous success, and at the opening night the police were called to keep order at the ticket offices, and many people were turned away. My father, and brother Lin, attended the opening night, and "Steele Rudd" received a rousing ovation following his short speech at the final curtain. Lin says he never saw any one shake and tremble so much. In many respects he was a nervous man.

Possibly many today know little of "Steele Rudd" and many may not have read "On Our Selection." But, I have

little doubt that most are familiar with those characters "Dad" and "Dave." Well, these are Steele Rudd's creations, but unfortunately many have come to regard them as "Hill Billies" and this is readily understandable because of the way they have been burlesqued and lampooned over the years, by radio presentations in particular.

Let me make it abundantly clear that these lampooned presentations are not the products of "Steele Rudd's" pen; his characters were homely, generous, and unsophisticated.

In 1917, my mother's health deteriorated following news of the death of my brother, Gower, on active service in France, in the First World War, and on medical advice we packed the family belongings, including "Sandy," our kelpie dog, by particular care, and returned to live at Clayfield, Brisbane.

"STEELE RUDD'S" ANNUAL

Magazine work again came into being, and once more the close attachment with "Ned" Ashton Murphy, artist and writer, was re-established, and the first number of "Steele Rudd's Annual," as it was called, was published in 1917.



A photograph of Arthur Hoey Davis ("Steele Rudd") taken in 1920, when he was aged 52.

This happy Davis-Murphy combination continued until 1925.

Father found time to interest himself in other activities; he was chairman and adjudicator of the Young Men's Debating Club at Scots Church, Clayfield; steward in the horse judging section of the Royal National Association, Brisbane; and a member of the Johnsonian Club. And being a horse lover, he occasionally went to the races when the meetings were at Eagle Farm.

Not infrequently, he accompanied his life-long friend, the late Dr. E. S. Jackson, on fishing trips to Victoria Point. The part of these trips which did not altogether agree with him,



"LOOK AT THE SHOULDER ON HER! AND THE LOIN SHE HAS!"

One of the illustrations in "On Our Selection".

was sunburn; it took its toll of his ruddy complexion, to say nothing of blistered feet. However, looking back, I fancy that a few shots of whisky produced some beneficial effects.

The Queensland Authors and Artists' Association, of which he was a foundation vice-president, also absorbed some of his interest from its inception about 1920.

Our mother was lost to the family circle, and in 1926 he moved again to Sydney, this time alone, to endeavour to follow his fortune with his pen and journalism. The family were grown up. There he ran and edited a combined publication called "Steele Rudds" and "The Shop Assistants' Magazine." I am ignorant of its progress, but I am inclined to the assumption that it drifted.

In 1927, "Phillips Film Productions Ltd." basically American, arrived to put Australia on the map in the film industry. A company was formed and "Steele Rudd" entered into an agreement to have his recent book, "The Romance of Runnybede" filmed. This book had some aboriginal backgrounds, and permission was obtained from the Queensland Government for shootings of the film to take place at "Barambah Mission" (now Cherbourg), outside Murgon, Queensland, an aboriginal reserve where quite a few of the aborigines featured in the picture.

The formation of the company could have been an enterprising undertaking at the time—but as far as father was concerned it was "the rock on which he perished—financially," because what limited resources he had he was induced to put into it—the venture failed.

SUCCESSFUL FILM

By way of contrast, it is of interest to note that "Te Pana," the film critic, writing in the "Courier-Mail" of 2 December 1942, under the heading "The Film Industry in Australia" had this to say: "The most successful of all Australian films—'On Our Selection'—was made by Bert Bailey in 1932. It is still being screened in Brisbane suburbs and is credited with taking more than any other film at the box office, and record attendance." That review was written twenty-six years ago and I am able to say that today a small flow of royalties still comes to hand from that production.

In Sydney, from the late 1920's, possibly up to the time he died, he lived very humbly. The depression years were upon us, but he continued to eke out a living with contributions—mainly to "The Sydney Bulletin" and a few other periodicals. In 1930, he was granted a literary pension of

25/- per week; small and all, he was most appreciative of receiving it.

In 1935, he finished writing his last book, "Green Grey Homestead," which, like most of his literary works, he sold very cheaply. In all, he wrote twenty-four books and five plays, and as administrator of his estate I have entered into arrangements for all of his works to be progressively republished by Angus and Robertson Ltd. and the University of Queensland Press. This is taking place.

July 1935, saw his health deteriorate, necessitating admission to St. Luke's Hospital, Sydney. However, subsequent arrangements were made for him to come to Brisbane where he was admitted to hospital in September 1935.

His complaint was deep-seated and he knew it. However, despite his knowledge of this, and also that his time was very limited, he still retained his brightness of expression. This was exemplified to me on my last visit to him, when he told me that the doctor had expressed the wish to operate upon him. His reply to the surgeon was: "He had not the slightest desire for anyone to open him up in order to obtain a panoramic view of his interior."

He passed away on 11 October 1935, and an impressive graveside ceremony was conducted at the Toowong cemetery by his old friend, the Rev. Scott MacDonald.²

In 1956, through the efforts of The Queensland Authors and Artists' Association a fine tablet and headstone was erected on his grave, at a public ceremony. Foremost in bringing this about were Mr. R. S. Byrnes (President) and Messrs. N. Harvey and J. Francis.

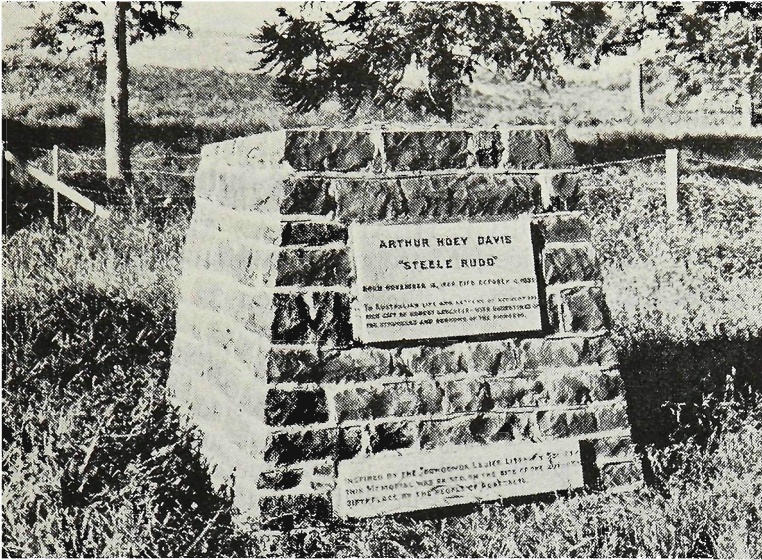
Let me say that "Steele Rudd" was a Draytonite, a Queenslander and an Australian, who wrote of the land and the people he knew—he brought out the best in them; he shared their lives; their joys; their sorrows; their pleasures and their hardships.

"A SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING"

He dealt with situations in a humorous manner when occasions arose, and these were many, but he wrote with a sympathetic understanding of the struggles and the setbacks of those pioneers.

He captured the true spirit of those wonderful men and women of years ago; and above all he was a staunch friend and a good father.

². For many years, Scott MacDonald wrote the Saturday literary leader of the *Brisbane Courier*.



"Steele Rudd's" Memorial Cairn at Drayton, Queensland.

In his span of sixty-seven years, he experienced most of the vicissitudes of life; he tasted of the bitter and he tasted the sweet; he came from a humble beginning, and as the years went by, he knew what it was to be acclaimed. At times, the going was easy, but more often than not the path was hard and difficult. However, whatever his finer points, and they were many, and whatever his failings, of which like all mortals, he had his share, he has left his mark in Australian literature.

Knowing him as I did, and his philosophy of life I feel it is fitting to conclude with the following lines from his favourite poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon:

*"For good undone and gifts mis-spent and resolutions vain,
'Tis somewhat late to worry, this I know,
I would live the same life over if I had to live again
And the chances are I'd go where most men go."*